

STORM WARNINGS

FOUR TALES OF DESPAIR BY STEVE WILLIS \$2.00





STORM WARNINGS

BY STEVE WILLIS

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production and cover design

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Special thanks to Roberta Gregory

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THE BUTTON DIDN'T BLINK.
IT STARED RIGHT AT HIM.

IT TEMPTED HIM,
INVITED HIM...

...BUT HE WOULDN'T BE
SEDUCED EASILY.



HE WAS... THE LAST GOOD MAN

KANE ABELMANN'S DRIVE TO WORK WAS A BIT DIFFERENT ON THIS APRIL MONTANA MORNING. THE LAST OF THE SNOW HAD MELTED, THE BIRDS WERE RETURNING, AND HE DIDN'T HAVE TO SCRAPE THE FROST FROM HIS WINDSHIELD FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS. IN A COUPLE MORE WEEKS HE COULD LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THE SUN BREAK THE HORIZON.



HE LIKED THE CHANGE IN SEASONS. HE LIKED MONTANA. HIS JOB WASN'T GREAT, BUT THE PAY WAS GOOD, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THAT HE LIVED ALONE.



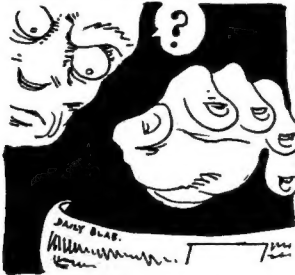
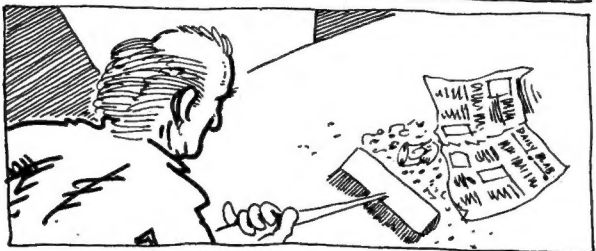
HE WAS A QUIET MAN WITH A QUIET LIFE, A WEEK-END FOOTBALL ARMCHAIR SIX-PACKER. HE WASN'T A SAINT, BUT HE USUALLY TRIED TO FOLLOW THE GOOD BOOK.




THERE WAS ONLY ONE UNUSUAL
THING ABOUT HIS LIFE. HE WAS A
CUSTODIAN. THAT IN ITSELF IS NOT
UNUSUAL, BUT ---



---HE WAS A CUSTODIAN IN A NUCLEAR
MISSILE SILO!



JOE! FRANK?!
HEY, YOU GUYS?!


DAILY WORLD NUCLE
FREEZE TODAY
BLAB

WHERE ARE THEY? COME TO THINK OF
IT... I HAVEN'T HEARD OR SEEN
ANYONE ALL MORNING...?!

LOCKED?! THEY LOCKED IT FROM
THE OUTSIDE!

EXIT
RATTLE!
RATTLE!

MEANWHILE, IN WASHINGTON, D.C.---

WE'VE MANAGED TO MEET
YOUR ABSURD ORDER TO SHUT
DOWN AND ABANDON ALL OUR
NUCLEAR MISSILE BASES IN
RECORD TIME, MR. PRESIDENT.
BUT WE DO HAVE ONE SMALL
PROBLEM, SIR...

PROBLEM, MR. WRIGHT?

YES, I'M AFRAID SO. WE CAN ACCOUNT FOR ALL THE MISSILES EXCEPT FOR ONE ... SOMEWHERE IN A SILO IN MONTANA. THE COMPUTER ACCIDENTALLY WIPED OUT ALL DATA RELATING TO IT.



NO BIG DEAL. FORGET IT. THE DANGER IS OVER ... OUR GOAL HAS BEEN REACHED.



MR. WRIGHT, YOU ARE A LUCKY WITNESS TO HISTORY! OUR CLOWN CONSPIRACY OF TAKING OVER EVERY OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL POWER AND RIDDING THE WORLD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS COMPLETE! THE WORLD WILL FINALLY BE, AT LAST, A **FUN** PLACE TO LIVE !!!

YES, SIR.



NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, THE CABINET AND I MUST MEET TO HOST THE "WHITE HOUSE GONG SHOW."

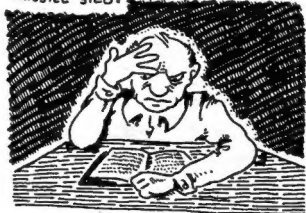
BUT---



AS THE YEARS PASSED, KANE WAS ABLE (NO PUN INTENDED) TO SURVIVE ON THE HUGE STOCK-PILE OF PROVISIONS.



IN HIS SPARE TIME - WHICH IS TO SAY, ALL OF HIS TIME - HE READ EACH MANUAL ON THE OPERATION OF THE MISSILE SILO.



LIVING ALONE DEEP IN THE EARTH FOR ANY LONG PERIOD OF TIME WOULD BREAK MOST MEN. BUT KANE WAS NOT LIKE MOST MEN.



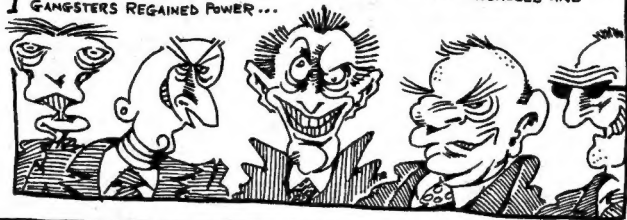
HE WAS A GOOD MAN, A STRONG MAN. BUT EVEN STILL, THE SILENCE HOWLED LIKE THE DEVIL.



IN AN AMAZINGLY SHORT TIME, KANE HAD MASTERED THE SILO'S FUNCTIONAL EQUIPMENT. HE COULD AIM THE MISSILE AT MOSCOW, HAVANA, NEW YORK, OR ANYWHERE HE WANTED. OF COURSE HE WOULD NEVER CONSIDER LAUNCHING IT BY SIMPLY PRESSING "THE BUTTON"... SO EASY TO DO...



LIFE ON THE SURFACE WAS CHANGING FAST. THE REIGN OF THE CLOWNS HAD COME TO A QUICK, UNKIND END. THE SAME OLD GROUP OF ASSHOLES AND GANGSTERS REGAINED POWER...



SINCE IT WOULD TAKE MUCH TOO LONG TO REBUILD THE NUCLEAR MISSILE "DEFENSE" NETWORK, THE LEADERS RESORTED TO A MORE HANDY WAR WEAPON ... SOMETHING FAR MORE SUBTLE THAN MISSILES...

ALL ABOARD FOR
FUN TIME!!

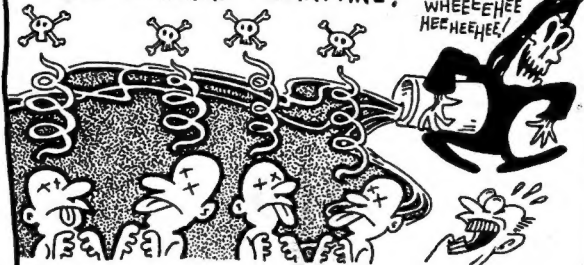
GANGWAY FOR ACTION
AND PROFITS GALORE!

TIME TO START THE
THIRD WORLD
WAR! HYUK!

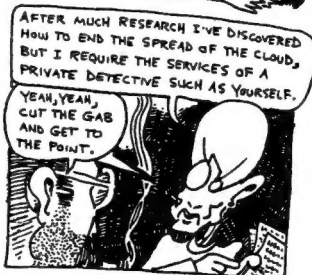
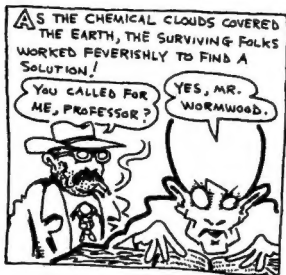


... BIO "LOGICAL" WARFARE!

WHEEEEEHEE
HEEHEEHEE!



BUT SOMETHING UNEXPECTED TOOK PLACE. THE MIXTURE OF VARIOUS TOXIC CHEMICALS TRANSFORMED HUMANS INTO FROGS! NO JOKE! NEEDLESS TO SAY, THEY WERE DEAD FROGS.



NO PROBLEM. IT'S RIGHT HERE
ON THE MAP.



LET'S MOVE! TIME IS RUNNING
SHORT!



BUT BACK IN THE SILO, TIME WAS
RUNNING SHORT FOR KANE. HE
WAS DYING. HE KNEW IT. HE HAD
THE MISSILE POINTED TO CORPUS
CHRISTI, TEXAS.



THAT'S RIGHT. NOT MOSCOW. NOT
HAVANA. NOT TEHRAN. HE HAD THE
MISSILE POINTED TO CORPUS CHRISTI,
TEXAS.

BACK IN THE 1950S, KANE WAS WRONGLY
ARRESTED IN CORPUS CHRISTI. BEFORE
HIS INNOCENCE WAS ESTABLISHED, HE
HAD SUFFERED GREAT DEGRADATION
FROM THE POLICE, COURTS, NEWS MEDIA,
AND FELLOW INMATES.



HE NEVER FORGOT CORPUS
CHRISTI. NOW HE COULD
PAY THEM BACK...





JUST BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN A STRANGER, HITCH-HIKING THROUGH TOWN, THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD WRAP UP THE CASE WITH HIM AS THE PATSY...

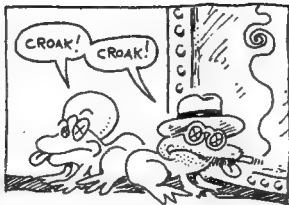


...HE WAS A GOOD MAN, A STRONG MAN...



...TOO STRONG TO BE TAKEN IN BY THE DEVIL. HE COULD HEAR THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS KNOCKING ON THE DOOR RIGHT NOW. HE WAS TOO STRONG TO ANSWER...

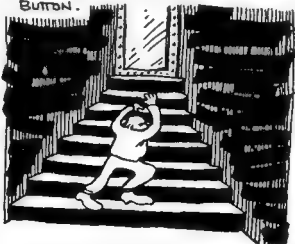




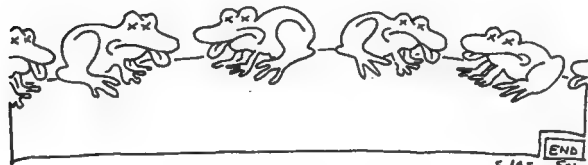
IN HIS LAST MOMENTS OF LIFE, KANE
WAS AT PEACE.



SATAN HAD TEMPTED HIM IN VAIN.
KANE HAD NOT PUSHED THE
BUTTON.



AND HE DIED KNOWING HE SAVED THE PLANET FROM WAR. HE WAS THE
LAST GOOD MAN.



END

SLIM
CHANCE and

FAT
FATE

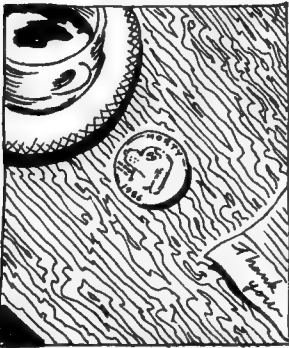
THERE WERE TWO POSSIBILITIES.
WHICH WOULD IT BE? WHEN HE
SLAPPED HIS COIN ON THE
COUNTER TO PAY FOR COFFEE,
WOULD IT BE HEADS UP, OR
TAILS UP? JUST A PASSING
THOUGHT...



THANKS
THELMA.



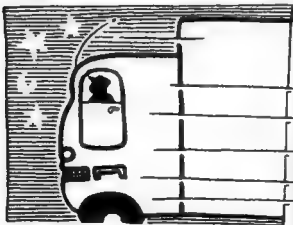
SEeya
NEXT
TIME
ORVILLE.



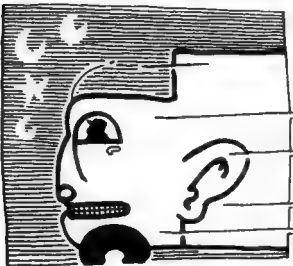
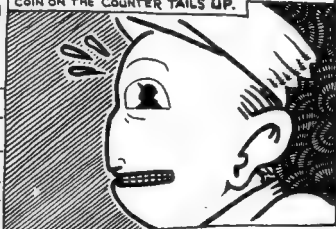
SO HEADS IT WAS.
BIG DEAL.



BUT AS HE DROVE TO SPOKANE, HEADS
DID INDEED BECOME A "BIG DEAL"...



IN HIS MIND'S EYE, HE COULD SEE HIS OTHER
POSSIBILITY-SELF...THE ONE WHO PUT THE
COIN ON THE COUNTER TAILS UP.



THAT "TAILS-UP-SELF" WAS DRIVING A LITTLE
FASTER THAN THE "HEADS-UP-SELF," AND AS A
CONSEQUENCE HE COULDN'T AVOID HITTING A
PORCUPINE...THUS BLOWING A TIRE.



DAD-BLANGED
FLASHLIGHT
BATTS
HAVE
BLINKED
OUT!

CLICK!
CLICK!

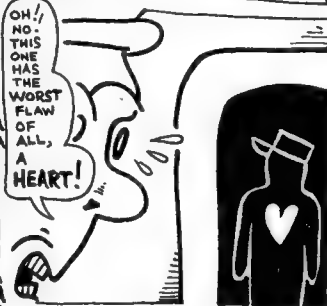
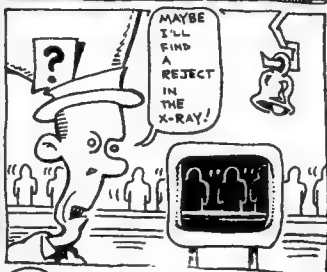
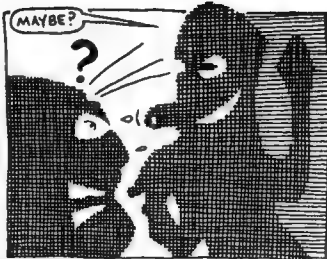
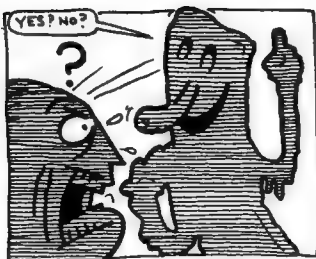


STARBUCK
AIN'T
FAR...

MAYBE
SOMEONE
IN
THAT
FARMHOUSE
CAN HELP!

WHAT'S
THAT
WEIRD
SOUND?





WELL,
WELL,
IT'S
AN
ORVILLE
REJECT!

SIR.
I TAKE
MY
HAT
OFF
TO
YOU.

DOFF!

THE
TOP
OF
THIS
HAT
IS
A
STRANGE
TEXTURE.

THE
TIP
OF
THIS
PEN
IS
A
DERANGED
FIXTURE.

SPECIAL
DELIVERY
FOR
ORVILLE!

**KNOCK
KNOCK**

LEARN
TO
SWIM,
YOU
WAD
OF
PHLEGM.

DEVICE
OF
PLOT
FROM
LITTLE
SNOT.

CUT
THE
CHETER
AND
HAND
ME
THE
LETTER.

IT'S FROM THE ACME CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL OF BULLFIGHTING.

"LEARN THE ART OF BULLFIGHTING IN THE PRIVACY OF YOUR OWN HOME."

SNORT!

"LESSON NUMBER ONE: WALK SLOWLY TO THE BULL, WHO IS NO DOUBT IN THE ROOM."

SNURT! NART!

"THEN, GRAB THE BULL BY THE HORNS..."

"AND WRAP AND PULL ON THE HORNS..."

HEY, THERE'S A GUY IN THE ROAD. MAYBE I SHOULD HONK THE HORN.

AND
FINALLY,
HEADS-UP
ORVILLE
MET
TAILS-UP
ORVILLE—

WHAT'S
WRONG,
BUB?

RAN
OVER
A
PORCUPINE.
GOT
A
FLAT.

HOP
IN.
I'LL
TAKE
YOU
TO
STARBUCK.

THANKS.

WHEN
A
HEADS-UP
AND
TAILS-UP
MEET,
IT'S
BAD
NEWS.

MY
NAME'S
ORVILLE.

SO'S
MINE.

THE
LAST
TIME
TWO
POLARITIES
MET,
IT
RESULTED
IN
WHAT
THEY
CALL
"THE
BIG
BANG."

GOOD
TO
MEET
Y...

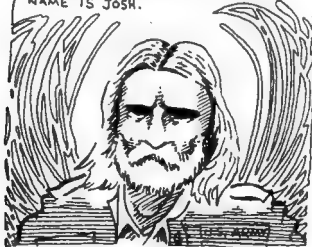
YAAARG!

YIEEE!

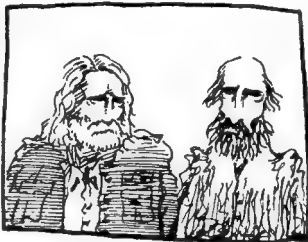
AND
THUS
A
HANDSHAKE
CAN
END
THE
UNIVERSE...

RAINMAKER PAINRAKER

I AIN'T GOT NO FAMILY. I AIN'T GOT NO HOME, NO JOB, NO NOTHIN'. MY NAME IS JOSH.



MY BUDDY'S NAME IS JACK. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN A BIT TOUCHED IN THE HEAD...



...BUT ON THAT NIGHT HE WENT OVERBOARD...

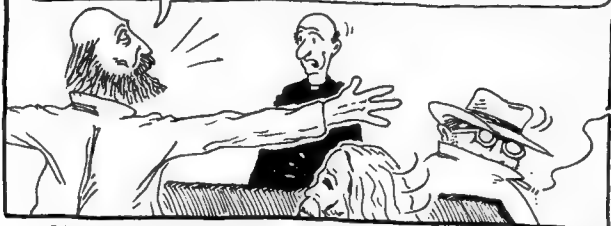
WISH THIS CLOWN WOULD HURRY UP SO WE CAN HIT THE GRUB.

police

"...THEN COMETH JESUS FROM GALILEE TO JORDAN UNTO JOHN, TO BE BAPTIZED OF HIM..."



MY FRIENDS, THE MESSIAH IS COMING, I WILL LEAD YOU TO HIM!!



GOOD GOIN', SHIT HEAD! NOW I'LL HAVE TO WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW TO EAT.

I MUST ISOLATE MYSELF TO COMMUNE WITH THE WORD. GOODBYE JOSH.



AND SURE ENOUGH, JACK VANISHED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. I HEARD A RUMOR THAT HE WENT OUT TO THE COUNTRY AND SURVIVED BY EATING GRASSHOPPERS.



THEN ONE DAY...

...YES MY BROTHERS, THE LORD IS RETURNING TO EARTH. BE PREPARED, REPENT THY SINS --



BUT BEFORE OUR MESSIAH ARRIVES,
12 DISCIPLES MUST BE SELECTED.
TOGETHER, THEIR COMBINED POWER
WILL LEAD THEM TO THE APPOINTED
ONE. AND THEN, EARTH WILL BE AS
HEAVEN...



YOU THERE. YES, YOU!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

ANDY FISCHER.
I...UH...



ANDY, IT WILL BE UP TO YOU TO
SELECT THE NEXT DISCIPLE, AND
THE TWO OF YOU WILL PICK A THIRD!
AND ON AND ON UNTIL ...



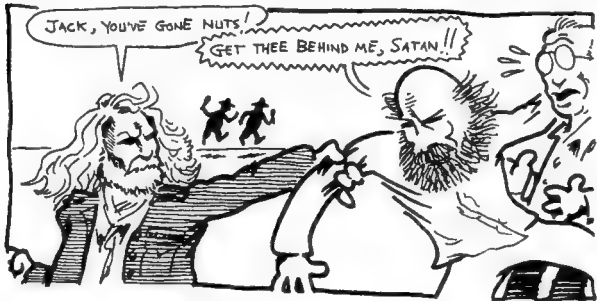
...YOUR COLLECTIVE POWER LEADS YOU TO
THE SAVIOR!

STOP!
STOP!



JACK, YOU'VE GONE NUTS!

GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN!!



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! 4 HOURS AGO I WAS SITTING IN MY OFFICE ROUTINELY COMPILING MEMOS, AND NOW...

IT'S THE SHITS, AIN'T IT?



ON THE CONTRARY. MY LIFE NOW HAS A MISSION AND PURPOSE... FOR THE FIRST TIME, I FEEL AT PEACE.

HE MEANS IT!



JACK, WHAT KIND OF SCAM ARE YOU PULLING HERE?

SCAM? NAY, I KNOW NOT SCAM!



I IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT WAR, POVERTY, HATRED...A WORLD WIPED FREE OF SIN. WHEN THE MESSIAH COMES, THIS WILL ALL COME TO BE.

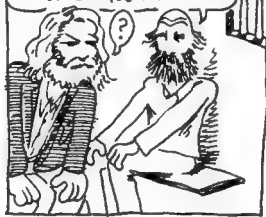


I KNOW YOU, JOSH. AND I KNOW YOU FOR YOUR EVIL. REPENT. REPENT NOW!

LOOK PAL, IF YOU DON'T LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF, THE ONLY HELPING HAND YOU'LL GET IS WHEN THEY LOWER THE BOX.



ALWAYS THE CYNIC, AIN'T YA? WELL, IT'S YOUR CHOICE. NOW I MUST BID YOU FAREWELL.





EXPLAINING JACK'S HEAD ON THE FLOOR WASN'T EASY WHEN THE HEAT GOT ON OUR BACKS. BUT WE DID IT, AND THE NEXT DAY I WAS FREE. WEIRDED OUT, BUT FREE.

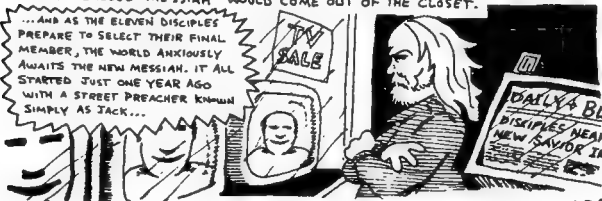


THE NEXT TIME I SAW ANDY FISCHER, HE HAD GAINED ANOTHER "DISCIPLE"... HIS BROTHER, PETE.

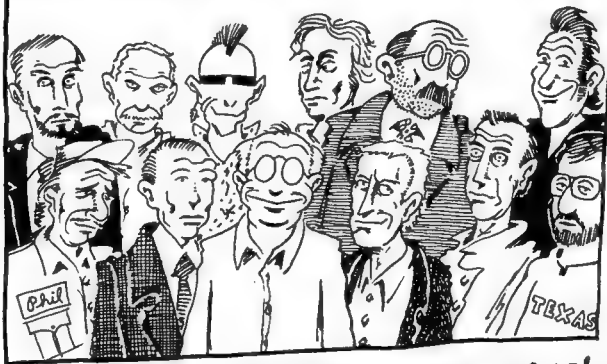


AND AS THE "DISCIPLES" GREW IN NUMBER, MORE AND MORE FOLKS GOT ALL WORKED UP OVER 'EM. EVERYONE KNEW THAT ONCE THE 12TH AND FINAL CHUMP WAS PICKED, IT WOULD ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE SO-CALLED "MESSIAH" WOULD COME OUT OF THE CLOSET.

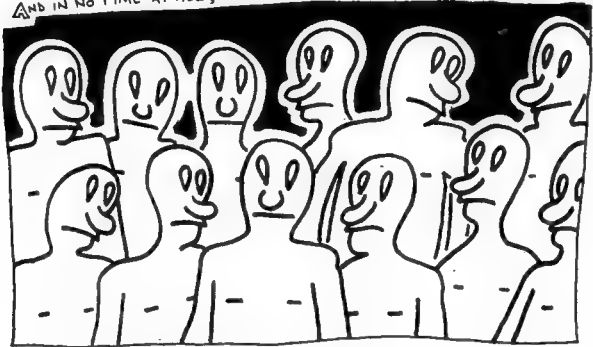
...AND AS THE ELEVEN DISCIPLES PREPARE TO SELECT THEIR FINAL MEMBER, THE WORLD ANXIOUSLY AWAITS THE NEW MESSIAH. IT ALL STARTED JUST ONE YEAR AGO WITH A STREET PREACHER KNOWN SIMPLY AS JACK...



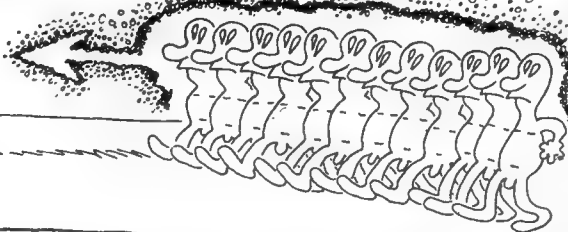
FINALLY THE 12 WAS COMPLETE --- ALL FROM DIFFERENT WALKS OF LIFE.
ALL A LITTLE HALF-BAKED---



AND IN NO TIME AT ALL, THOSE GUYS STARTED LOOKING THE SAME!



THEY NEVER ATE, THEY NEVER GOT ANY SHUT-EYE. THEY JUST KEPT WALKING, PUTTING TOGETHER THEIR ENERGIES, CLAIMING THAT THIS FORCE WOULD SOON LEAD THEM TO THE "SAVIOR"



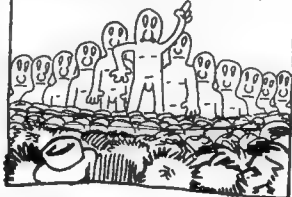
SOME FOLKS TRIED TO BUMP OFF THE DISCIPLES, BUT THEY COULDN'T BE KILLED.

THUD

POW!
POW!
POW!



AND EVERYWHERE THEY WENT, THEY DEMANDED THAT ALL TRACES OF SIN BE WIPED OUT. AND PEOPLE OBEYED!



IN EVERY BURGHESS THEY VISITED, PORN SHOPS, LIQUOR STORES, LIBRARIES, ABORTION CLINICS, GUN SHOPS, ART GALLERIES, etc. GOT THE TORCH.

ANOTHER JOB WELL DONE.



THEN ONE DAY---

KEE-RIPES!

MY FRIENDS, THE TIME IS VERY SHORT. OUR SAVIOR
IS ALMOST HERE---



WE CAN FEEL HIM NEAR, HE... WAIT!
THERE HE IS!!



THE MESSIAH!!

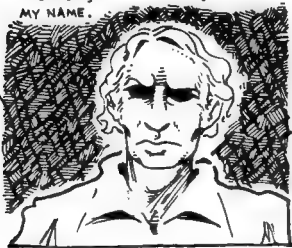


EEEYOWP! TIME TO MOVE!

MESSIAH!
MESSIAH!
MESSIAH!
MESSIAH!



I HOPPED A FREIGHT TO THE WEST COAST, CUT MY HAIR, CHANGED MY NAME.



GOT MYSELF A JOB WITH A CARPENTRY OUTFIT.

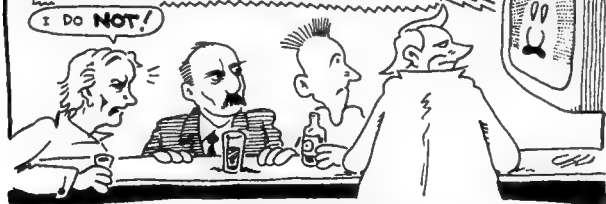


IN THE NEWS TODAY THE DISCIPLES ANNOUNCED THEY HAVE "HOMED IN" ON THE MESSIAH AND WILL PERSUADE HIM TO...

FAT CHANCE!

THEN ONE DAY, DURING AN AFTER-WORK DRINK—
DEEP IN HIS HEART HE KNOWS HE BELONGS TO US...

I DO NOT!



IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE REALIZES HOW MUCH THE WORLD NEEDS HIM---

HEY, IT'S...

IT'S HIM!

THE MESSIAH!



I RAN AWAY TO MY APART-MENT,
HOPING TO ESCAPE THOSE CLOWNS.



BUT---

HELLO
JOSH.



HUH?! WHO ARE YOU?
HOW DID ...



I SERVE THE DISCIPLES AND "TUNED IN"
ON YOU. YOU **MUST** KNOW BY NOW
THAT YOU HAVE "THE POWER"...

I KNOW NO SUCH
THING...



THEN WHY DID THAT GLASS OF WATER
JUST CHANGE TO WINE?



HEY, THAT'S GREAT!
I'LL MAKE MILLIONS!

MAKING MILLIONS OF
DOLLARS IS NOT YOUR
CALLING. BUT SAVING
MILLIONS OF SOULS
IS YOUR DUTY...

THINK OF IT! UNDER YOU THE WORLD
WILL BE **ALL ONE!** A PLANET
AT PEACE...



IMAGINE. NO WAR. NO POVERTY.
NO HATE. WE WILL ALL BE
BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND---

YEAH. NO HANGOVERS. NO
SCREWIN' AROUND. NO NUTHIN'
THAT MAKES LIVIN' WORTH LIVIN'.

I KNOW I AIN'T PERFECT. I KNOW MY
LIFE IS A MESS, BUT WHAT YOU ZOMBIES
HAVE IN MIND JUST AIN'T ... AIN'T ...
HUMAN!

PRECISELY. HUMANS ARE BORN
INTO SIN. BUT THAT WILL CHANGE,
AS YOU ARE CHANGING NOW.

YAAA!

THE DISCIPLES ARE COMING TO
CLAIM YOU NOW. A NEW ERA IS
ABOUT TO BEGIN---

NEVER ... I WILL **NEVER** GIVE IN!

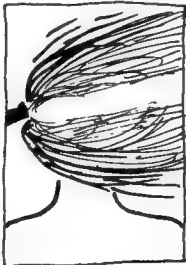
I'M FADING AWAY FAST, FEEL LIKE
I'M DRAINING INTO A WHIRLPOOL ...



MESSIAH! WE AWAIT YOUR WORD!



THIS IS MY BODY.
THIS IS MY BLOOD.



THIS IS IT. THE END. HE'S
DEAD. NO MORE STORY.

DOWNTIME LAFF RIOT!

INSIDE EACH OF US THERE SLEEPS A MONSTER. IF WE'RE LUCKY, IT STAYS THAT WAY, SLUMBERING AWAY IN NOCTURNAL BLISS. IF WE'RE NOT, IT RUMBLES TO THE SURFACE, PURPOSEFULLY BULLYING AND ULTIMATELY DEVOURING ITS OWN HOST. MANY CLASSIC CASES ARE CURRENTLY ON DISPLAY IN MENTAL INSTITUTIONS AND IN THE HIGHEST SEATS OF POWER. EACH OF US HAS OUR HOUR WITH OUR OWN MONSTER, WITH VARYING DEGREES OF FREQUENCY AND SUCCESS. THE FOLLOWING CASE CONCERNS A MAN WHO WAS ENGAGED IN SUCH A STRUGGLE AND, AFTER A FASHION, WON.

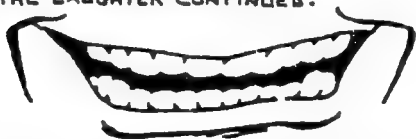


HIS MONSTER ROSE SLOWLY, REVEALING ITSELF AT FIRST AS A BARELY DISCERNABLE RIPPLE ALONG A SMOOTH, FAIR SURFACE. IT WAS IN THE LAUGH. THE LAUGHTER WOULD START HOURS BEFORE, WAY DOWN DEEP, RISEN FROM ITS SLEEP BY AN ICY FIRE, AND THEN POKE RUDELY UP, INCONGRUENTLY BETWEEN INANITIES.

AND IT ACCELERATED. AND IT STARTED TO HURT. HIS SENTENCES SEEMED LIKE LONG, SMOOTH WORMS GROWING PORCUPINE QUILLS.



SO HE SIMPLY CEASED SPEAKING. BUT THE LAUGHTER CONTINUED.

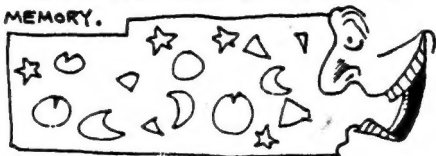


BUT IF WORDS WITHIN WERE UNDER CONTROL, ONLY A PANDEMONIUM OF PRIMITIVE SOUNDS VISITED HIM FROM "OUT THERE". LANGUAGE DISINTEGRATED INTO A COLLECTION OF CLICKS, CLUCKS AND CLACKS. THEIR LIPS MOVED, YES. EYE CONTACT WAS MADE, YES. BUT WERE THEY SPEAKING HIS TONGUE? HE THOUGHT NOT. IN NO TIME AT ALL IT BECAME IMPOSSIBLE TO DIVIDE HUMAN SOUNDS FROM ANY OTHER.

AND STILL HE LAUGHED.

THE COLORS PULSATED IN KODACHROME TIDES, SLOWLY PULLING AND EBBING INTO A BLACK HOLE EYE POOL.

OCCASIONALLY HE COULD DEFINE A VOICE, THE TURN OF A KEY, THE TICKING OF A CLICKING CLOCK. A VAGUE SHAPE MIGHT PRICK SOME STICKY CELL OF MEMORY.



AT LEAST HE STILL HAD HIS MEMORIES, IN FACT, HE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH ELSE. THE CORDS MAY SNAP ONE BY ONE, BUT THE EMPIRICAL CONTINUUM HELD FAST. AND, OH YES, HIS LAUGHTER. UNDERNEATH THE MULTIPLYING LAYERS OF LAUGHTER HE

WAS DIMLY AWARE OF STANDING IN A HORIZONTAL POSITION, FLYING UNDER-GROUND, ARMS HELD TO THE SKY STRAPPED TO HIS SIDES. AT LEAST I STILL HAVE MY MEMORIES.



AND THEN THE THIN, COLD NEEDLE SLIPPED UNDER HIS EYELID.



AND SUDDENLY, HE HAD THE LUXURY OF NO PAST. THE LAUGHTER FINALLY STOPPED.



HE DIDN'T KNOW IT, BUT HE HAD BEATEN THE MONSTER.





BORN.

SUFFERED.

DIED.

